



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

The U.S. government has decided to ease travel restrictions for U.S. citizens traveling to Western Hemisphere countries this summer by temporarily waiving passport requirements. As you may remember, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) that went into effect this past January requires that all U.S. citizens have a passport when traveling to countries within the Western Hemisphere. This primarily affects U.S. citizens who are traveling by air to and from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. The decision to temporarily lift this requirement was made due to lengthy backlogs at passport offices. Travelers who have applied for a passport and are waiting to receive one will now be able to show a government issued photo ID and proof that their passport application is being processed. They will not be required to have a passport, as the new WHTI rule requires. Since the WHTI rule went into effect, millions of U.S. citizens have applied for a passport. The State Department says the temporary rule will be in place until September 30th. To obtain proof of a passport application, please visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/status/status_2567.html.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Save the Date: The 27th Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism

This year's 27th Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism is July 11-13 at the Arizona Biltmore Resort and Spa. The program will be a dynamic mix of fresh industry information and resources that can help you plan for another year of marketing Arizona to audiences around the world. Breakout sessions and speakers will teach you how to take tourism marketing and promotion to a new level. With so many exciting opportunities happening nationally, the Arizona Office of Tourism and its association partners are committed to bringing you the most up-to-date tools available for tourism professionals. For more information and to register for the event, please visit www.aztourismconference.com.

Arizona Tourism University (ATU) – How to Build an Itinerary and Conduct a FAM Tour

AOT is proud to present the next series of ATU workshops "How to Build an Itinerary and Conduct a FAM Tour." This workshop series will answer common questions such as what is a Familiarization (FAM) tour, why does AOT conduct FAM tours, is a FAM tour right for your community, and how to develop and execute an itinerary. Below is a listing of workshop times and locations. To register, please contact Sarah Martins by phone at 602-364-3687 or via e-mail at smartins@azot.gov.

June 20, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Mountainside Inn
642 East Route 66
Williams, AZ 86046

June 21, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Cochise College
Benson Center
1025 State Route 90
Benson, AZ 85602

June 22, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Crowne Plaza San Marcos Golf Resort
One San Marcos Place
Chandler, AZ 85225

AOT Posts 2007 1st Quarter Newsletter

The 1st Quarter Research Tourism Indicator Newsletter is now available on the Research section of www.azot.gov. The newsletter contains 1st quarter 2007 indicators for lodging, air passenger traffic, tourism related tax revenues, State and National Park visitation and visitor counts from Painted Cliffs Welcome Center. For more information, contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Fiscal Year 2008 – Coming Soon!

The release of the Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for fiscal year 2008 is coming soon! The primary objective of the competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. For more information, please contact Karen McClurg at kmccclurg@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

AOT Hosts LA Media Marketplace

AOT is organizing a media marketplace event in Los Angeles on Thursday, Sept. 27 at the Beverly Wilshire, A Four Season Hotel. The event will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. and will allow Arizona tourism partners the opportunity to meet with Los Angeles area media. The Los Angeles Media Marketplace is open to Arizona Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Designated Marketing Organizations and members. Participation will be limited to 20 partners and is available on a first come, first served basis. The participation fee is \$500, which includes up to two delegates, the venue, catering, invitations and coordination fees. For more information or to request a participation form please contact Jacki Mieler at jmieler@azot.gov or Erica Rich at erich@azot.gov.

From Schnitzel to Saguaros...Arizona Hosts German Travel Agents

Arizona recently hosted 22 travel agents from Germany on a week long familiarization (FAM) tour around the state. The FAM trip was sponsored by United Airlines and the German tour operator, DERTOUR and was made up of their top selling agents from all over Germany. The trip was a first time visit for many of the attendees. They experienced the diversity of Arizona, with overnight stays in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Carefree and Tucson. They also indulged in a truly western experience at Tanque Verde Guest Ranch. The packed itinerary had the group visiting various hotels and resorts in the different regions, as well as enjoying some of Arizona's most popular attractions including The Heard Museum in Phoenix, The Grand Canyon National Park and the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, where they were lucky enough to enjoy a night viewing of Saturn. For more information please contact Hylton Fothergill at 602-364-3706 or via e-mail at hfothergill@azot.gov.

AOT Hosts its First French FAM

AOT recently hosted six tour operators from France on a six-day tour of the state. The group was made up of representatives from major French tour operators and was an opportunity for AOT and its partners to showcase the Grand Canyon State. Following overnight stays at two resorts in Scottsdale and Carefree, the group headed to the Grand Canyon where they spent time in the National Park and experienced a helicopter sightseeing flight before continuing to Flagstaff where they visited the Museum of Northern Arizona, the Arboretum and Lowell Observatory for some night viewing. After a two-night stay in Northern Arizona the group headed south to Tucson for the final leg of their trip. In addition to enjoying a resort and ranch stay (complete with horse trail ride) they experienced the beauty of the Sonoran Desert Museum and Mission San Xavier Del Bac. This was the first time AOT has hosted a FAM trip from France and it was a huge success. Only one member of the group had previously visited Arizona so it was an excellent opportunity to show them a small portion of what Arizona has to offer the French visitor. For more information, please contact Hylton Fothergill at: 602-364-3706 or via e-mail at hfothergill@azot.gov.

Vacaciones Sonora Expo International 2007

AOT had a booth at Vacaciones Sonora Expo International 2007 in Hermosillo, Sonora last weekend in the Centro de Convenciones Expo Forum. The June 2 and 3rd event was very well attended with more than four thousands visitors. Families went to the expo to plan their next vacation, and many of them picked up Arizona maps and AOT's Visita Arizona guide. Several attendees said they had never been to Arizona and many wanted to find new places to discover within the Grand Canyon State. For more information, contact Laura French at lfrench@azot.gov.

Industry News

Save the Date: Watchable Wildlife Conference, Oct. 3-5

The 2007 Watchable Wildlife Conference will be held in Tucson, Arizona from October 3-5. Mark your calendar and plan to join your colleagues at North America's 16th annual meeting of wildlife/tourism professionals. Participate in the in depth sessions concentrating on Wildlife Tourism Development and Management Programs, Wildlife Viewing Site Development, and Natural Resource Conservation Management. Hear the leading professional wildlife managers, business owners, and authors in the field of Wildlife/Nature Tourism. This beautiful southwest location offers the opportunity to experience the wild and scenic landscape of one of the world's most diverse wildlife viewing areas. Field trips to many of the area's top wildlife viewing sites are planned to make this conference a hands-on learning experience and help attendees better understand the challenges facing our nation's border states. Experience a different breed of wildlife. Arizona is filled with wonder and diversity, from the lush Sonoran Desert to the pine-covered Colorado Plateau. Abundant public lands and wilderness provide residents and visitors with countless opportunities to experience nature and observe wildlife. The DoubleTree Hotel Tucson at Reid Park will be the host site, and reduced conference rates including government per diems have been arranged. We will be keeping you posted on the program, speakers, and conference field trips with periodic e-messages as well as the conference page of our website at www.watchablewildlife.org.

U.S. Could See Boom in Chinese Tourists

The U.S. tourist industry better learn how to say ni hao ma. That's Chinese for hello. A growing interest in tourism among Chinese who have seen their incomes rise while travel restrictions have lessened could bring a fortune to hotels, tour companies and attractions in the U.S. The number of Chinese who travel each year is expected to nearly triple to 100 million people by 2020. "In the next 10 years, it will probably dwarf any overseas market we may have, with the potential to dwarf all overseas markets combined," said Bruce Bommarito of the Travel Industry Association. While the number of Chinese visitors has been increasing, they certainly haven't been overwhelming American tourist attractions. Just 320,000 Chinese--1.5 percent of all overseas visitors--traveled to the U.S. in 2006. Of the Chinese who left the mainland, fewer than 1 in 100 headed for the U.S. (*Arizona Republic.com/Business*, 6/3)

Surveys Sees More Leisure Travel

The demand for leisure travel continues to grow, but the manner in which Americans vacation continues to change, according to the newly released 2007 National Leisure Travel Monitor by Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell. The percentage of adult Americans who have taken at least one overnight trip of more than 75 miles from home continues to rise. According to the 2007 study, fully 95 percent of American adults took such a trip during the past 12 months, up from 92 percent last year. Among the trends: one-third of respondents expect to take more trips this year

versus 26 percent who expect to take fewer trips. The most popular type of vacation remains "visiting friends and relatives" (56 percent), followed by beach or lake vacations (27 percent), general sightseeing vacations (21 percent), urban or city vacations (15 percent) and cruise vacations (12 percent). (*Modern Agent.com*)

Hotel Service Goes Over the Top

Not long ago, the best one could hope for in extraordinary hotel service was an unusually fluffy imported duvet, express dry cleaning and perhaps even fulfillment of a random late-night food craving. But as discerning travelers spend more extravagantly, they have become increasingly demanding, says Time. Luxury hotels are responding with all kinds of new, over-the-top amenities--from sundaes dished up in guests' rooms to poolside tanning butlers or canine room service. Luxury hotels are also playing the service card to attract specific groups of travelers such as families, expectant moms and pet owners. "The trend has been moving toward marketing to smaller and smaller niches who can afford to indulge in their wants and needs," notes Doug Shifflet, president and CEO of D.K.Shifflet & Associates, a McLean, Va., market research firm. (*Time.com*, 6/11)

Vacations to Help One Get in Shape

Lazy days at the beach? A week of golf (by golf cart)? Not for a growing number of middle-aged travelers bent on getting healthy while they're having fun. Active travel represented an estimated \$55 billion slice of the vacation market in 2006, and that figure is climbing rapidly, says U.S. News & World Report. People get in shape so they can go on one of these trips, says Colleen Cannon, a world champion triathlete and founder of Women's Quest, the Colorado-based travel company that runs active vacations. She expects some 400 women to attend the athletic getaways offered this year, up from 60 a decade ago. At GordonsGuide.com, a Web resource for active travelers, more than 1,200 tour providers list more than 10,000 trips, half again as many as were listed in 2004. (*U.S. News & World Report.com*, 6/11)

Study: Lowest Paid Americans Planning Biggest Increase in Travel Spending

So it may come as a surprise, but a recent study found that American travelers making the least amount of money are planning the biggest increase in their travel budgets. The Funjet Vacations study found 16 percent of Americans earning \$25,000 or less are planning the biggest increases -- 50 percent plan to spend more. Not so surprising was the fact that nearly 90 percent of American travelers plan to spend the same or more than they did last year on air and hotel getaways. "Approximately 29 percent of those that make the most money -- \$75,000 or greater -- want to spend the same amount on their vacations this year as they did in 2006," according to the study. The group with the greatest increase in vacation spending plans was 25-to-34 year olds. Another study result: women plan to outspend men by 25 percent more than last year on air and hotel for vacation. Forty-four percent of men said they plan to spend the same as last year. The study included 1,500 US respondents. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-newsletter*)

JetBlue: thumbs up; US Air: thumbs down

There has been some good news for JetBlue and bad news for US Air. The nation's travelers appear quick to forgive JetBlue for its "Valentine's Day meltdown." It was named the favorite airline of US fliers, according to a survey by the Consumer Reports National Research Center. The survey ranked JetBlue as No. 1 in customer satisfaction with a score of 87 out of a possible 100, beating out rivals overall in terms of check-in ease, seating comfort, on-time performance and in-flight service. At the same time, "no airline irked Consumer Reports readers more than US Airways," said the group. US and America West tied for the worst customers satisfaction scores

out of 18 airlines, wrote *The Arizona Republic*. Reuters says the poll of 23,000 travelers covered 31,455 domestic flights and "was conducted in early February, just before a Valentine's Day ice storm in New York led JetBlue to cancel almost 1,200 flights over the following days and left passengers stranded on planes for hours." In its recap of the survey, *Consumer Reports* concludes that "if JetBlue, Southwest, Frontier, or Hawaiian flies your route, look no further. All four of those airlines provided a superior experience, according to our readers, and at a price that's often lower than those of their competitors. Midwest also scored high for satisfaction, but its tickets can be pricier." Why are customers so quick to forgive JetBlue and not US Airways? *Consumer Reports* spokesman Donato Vaccaro suggests that may be because fliers may have "already had such a positive experience with [JetBlue] in the past. It's possible that US Airways, on the other hand, was already at the bottom and that was just another thing that made people especially disappointed." (Report by David Wilkening, *TravelMole e-newsletter*)